DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 035 323 FL 001 072

AUTHOR Bolinger, Dwight L.
TITLE Three Analogies.
INSTITUTION American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portugese.
PUB DATE Mar 61
NOTE 4p.; Reprint from Hispania, v44 n1 p134-137 Mar 1961

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.30
DESCRIPTORS Intonation, *Language Instruction, Language Usage, Romance Languages, Second Language Learning, *Spanish, Syntax, *Teaching Techniques, Transformations (Language), *Translation, *Verbs

ABSTRACT

Three examples are given of cases where differences between Spanish and English syntax and intonation patterns are taught best through direct translation. Grammatical difficulties caused by "gustar" are overcome through the use of translation using "appeal" rather than "please". Similarly, problems for native speakers of English arising with "poder" are resolved. The relation of Spanish statement intonation to English commands is also examined. (RL)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

ED035323

# THREE ANALOGIES

DWIGHT L. BOLINGER
*University of Colorado*

It is useful, in teaching the lexicon or grammar of a foreign language, to be able to make statements like "*Manta* is the word for *blanket*," or "*Trabajar* means *to work*." Some feel that this is a poor substitute for feeling a blanket and saying *manta* or wielding a shovel and saying *trabajar;* but blankets are not always handy, and one must do a lot more than wield a shovel in order to approximate the meaning of *trabajar—to work* and *trabajar* are both generalizations, while the act of wielding a shovel is not. There are plenty of practical situations where it is necessary to TRANSLATE rather than to POINT OUT.

The more concrete the reference, the easier it is, as a rule, to find a translation equivalent. An entity as hard to mistake and as hard to get along without as water is going to be verbalized somehow, as an entity, in most languages. But the more abstract or intangible a thing is, the greater is the likelihood that the cross-language equivalents will be skewed. And when we pass from the ways in which language organizes reality to the ways in which it organizes our attitudes toward reality, neat equivalence is the exception rather than the rule. Under these circumstances a good equivalent is worth looking for. In that uncertain area where we generally have to be content with statements like "A *manta* is a broad piece of woven fabric used as a covering," it helps to be able to make statements like "A *manta* is a blanket."

I offer three instances, one involving a transformation (change in structure between English and Spanish), and two involving the prosodic features of length and pitch.

## *I. Gustar*

Our difficulties here are perennial. Whatever stratagem we use, our students must still derive a Spanish sentence that reverses the grammatical functions (but not usually the word order) of the English subject and object. Our favorite trick is to apply a transformation in English by replacing *like* with *please*. This turns subject and object around right enough, but is unsatisfactory in three ways. First, if we use the verb in its simple form there is no indication that the object in Spanish is indirect: *They please him* could be *Lo gustan* just as *They need him* can be *Lo necesitan*. Second, if the progressive form of *please* is resorted to in order to suggest an indirect object, the student may infer that the progressive should be used in Spanish: *They are pleasing to him* could be *Le están gustando* just as *They are singing to him* can be *Le están cantando*. Third, the student has to keep in mind that despite the grammatical transformation, the word order normally remains the same as in English: *He likes to read* is *Le gusta leer*, not *Leer le gusta*.

The first two of these difficulties can be cleared up by calling on the verb *appeal* rather than *please*. *Appeal* takes an indirect object and remains in the simple tense: *He likes books—Books appeal to him—Le gustan los libros.*

## *II. Poder*

Ordinarily, English *may* with an infinitive is transformable to *poder* with a clause: *He may not come—Puede que no venga*. Sometimes the infinitive can be kept, as in English: this is true of third singular—*He may not come—Puede no venir*. It is less likely, however, with the other persons, e.g. *Puedes no venir*, where *Puede que no vengas* is preferable. (This suggests that the base construction, even with third person, is *Puede que no venga*, with the fact that the impersonal *puede* here is homophonous with a personal *puede* making for a blend of *Puede que venga* with *Puede venir*. A similar overlap

FL 001 072



Reprinted from Hispania March, 1961, Vol. XLIV No. 1

is found with the verb *parecer*.) Complicating this is the fact that in another meaning *may* calls for an infinitive and not for a clause: *You may sit down—Puede sentarse.*

The obvious way of handling this is to state the difference semantically: "Use *poder* with infinitive when the meaning is 'permission,' but with a clause when the meaning is 'possibility.'" There is, however, a formal difference that is surprisingly regular: English *may* for 'possibility' is lengthened and accented, *may* for 'permission' is not. Suppose an unethical player wishing to lose a game, but in danger of winning it; an interlocutor might say, *Look out, you may win—Puede que ganes.* But if persission is being given to win, this is *You may win—Puedes ganar;* English *may* is condensed and unaccented.

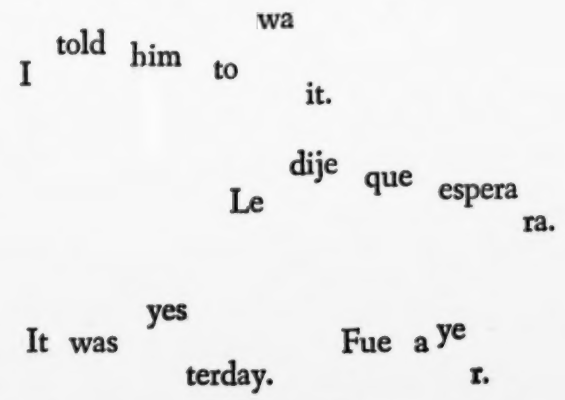
*III. Statement intonation*

The melodic unit in English and Spanish can be likened to a suspension bridge:

The ups and downs of the cable represent the rises and falls of the fundamental pitch of the voice, and the two humps at the position of the towers are the principal accents, where a syllable is made to stand out by a relatively sharp deviation of pitch, contrasting with a level or more gradual movement elsewhere—these are generally referred to as "stresses," but the term "accents" is preferable, for reasons that I will not go into here.[1]

This simplified diagram corresponds to utterances made up of just one melodic group and containing two accents. An even simpler form is the utterance with a single melodic group containing only one accent:

While utterances of these two kinds are outnumbered by other kinds of utterances, from the standpoint of running frequency they in turn probably outnumber all others in everyday conversational statements, which are too short to run to more than one melodic group and too matter-of-fact to lean heavily toward more emotion-laden shapes. Here are some examples:




As there is no essential difference between the way the cable is draped in the two languages when there is only one tower, we may dismiss statements containing a single accent with the recommendation to keep the pitch lower in Spanish than in English. As the examples show, however, the cable hangs differently when there are two towers; for this difference an analogy would be useful.

In American English the second pole is ordinarily higher than the first; in Spanish it is lower:

(The low-pitched beginning depends, of course, on there being an unaccented syllable or syllables before the first accent. If there is none, as in *Mòther wants you to come hóme,* or *Nàdie pudo hacer náda,* the anchored part at the left extreme will be absent.) There are many variations about the two norms—secondary ups and downs may occur with intermediate minor accents, in either language there may be a transitory jump up (rarely more than one syllable) after the first accent, in either language (but especially in Spanish) the abrupt final drop in pitch may

occur in part between the last syllable before the second accent and the accented syllable itself, etc.—but the essentially rising middle segment in American English, and the essentially falling middle segment in Spanish, are characteristic differences. Navarro's description is as follows: "Se observa . . . un descenso preparatorio y gradual que se manifiesta a partir de la sílaba acentuada anterior a la que recibe la cadencia. Después de dicho descenso, que suele reducirse a dos o tres semitonos, la voz baja rápidamente cuatro o cinco semitonos más en la última sílaba fuerte . . . ."[2]

As J. Donald Bowen points out, the transfer of the English pattern to the Spanish makes the Spanish sound "emphatic or contrastive."[3] We need a practical rule to head off the transfer.

The analogy to which I draw attention is between the normal pattern for statements and the normal pattern for commands in English. Whereas the statement *I told them to leave* would ordinarily be intoned

I told them to lea ve.

with the second accent, on *leave*, higher than the first accent on *told*, the command *Tell them to leave* would ordinarily sound as

Tell them to lea ve.

with the second accent on *leave* lower than the first accent on *tell*. If we heard

Tell them to lea ve.

we would infer an answer to the question *What shall I have them do?*, or a repetition of an original command which the hearer had not understood, or some other implication calling for special emphasis or contrast. The sentence *Explain a little about this new contract* would come out

Ex plain a little about this new con tract.

(with the option of a slight rise on *con-*, or a continuation of the downward motion, just as in Spanish statements), while the shape

Ex plain a little about this new con tract.

would appear contrastive or admonitory. Other command-like utterances are the same:

Let's go see what they're up to.

Similarly when an interrogative-word question is used as a suggestion for action:[4]

Why don't you call them?

This boils down to a simple rule: "In Spanish, make your statements sound the way commands sound in English."

## NOTES

[1] See Bolinger, "A Theory of Pitch Accent in English," *Word*, XIV (1958), 109-149, especially p. 127.

[2] *Manual de entonación española* (New York, 1944), p. 78. Navarro misses the contrast with American English, as he draws his comparison, p. 68, with British English. The only modification I would make to the statement quoted would be to word it so as to make clear the dependence of the "strong syllable" on the movement of pitch that accompanies it—it is not both strong *and* pitch-inflected, but strong mainly *because* it is pitch-inflected. This is the meaning of the term "pitch accent."

How widespread the Spanish pattern may be in the Spanish-speaking world I am not sure. Navarro refers, p. 68, to the "múltiple diversidad de las cadencias hispanoamericanas" in the middle segment, the "cuerpo de la unidad." I be-

live that the downward slant is prevalent among Spanish-speaking males, but as for female speakers I have doubts. "La impresión de sobriedad que en los extranjeros produce la entonación española" may be a masculine pose.

[3] *Hispania,* XXXIX (1956), 32-33. See also *Modern Spanish* (New York, 1960), pp. 48-50.

[4] If the suggestion for action is a "bright, new" idea, the shape will be the same as if the question were asked for information, with the second accent higher than the first, For practical reasons we can treat the accents and their relative pitches as if they characterized particular kinds of utterances grammatically, but at bottom they are emotive.

©

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY AATSP INC.

TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE U.S. OFFICE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER."